

Emotional and Social Development

Developing a Sense of Self

Strategies for Early Educators

- Help establish a sense of trust and security by developing warm and responsive relationships with every child. Greet each of them by name daily. Through smiles or friendly gestures, show you are pleased to see them.
- Respect individual temperaments and personal uniqueness and be aware of any personal circumstances in a child's life.
- Encourage children to express their feelings through appropriate words and actions.
- Communicate often with children, both individually and in small groups. Listen to what they are saying and show you value their opinions by acknowledging them and building on their ideas.
- Involve children in planning related to the classroom (e.g., ask for and use their ideas about visual displays, book selections, and activities).
- If possible, use children's home language in daily conversations with them.
- Help children identify themselves as unique individuals and as members of different groups (e.g., create and display family photo books; ask the children to describe something that is special about another child; put a full-length mirror in the classroom; use given names and pronounce them correctly).
- Design the classroom in a way that stimulates and challenges children and gives them choices that are appropriate for a range of ages, developmental stages, and abilities (e.g., freshen materials in activity centers to reflect emerging themes generated by children and children's interests.)
- Support the growth of children's feelings of competence and self-confidence (e.g., use books and games they create; provide access to materials that encourage them to stretch their abilities; provide positive comments about their accomplishments).
- Allow children to experiment without fear of criticism or danger. Treat mishaps such as spilling, dropping, or knocking over objects as opportunities for positive learning.
- Make the classroom environment safe, pleasant, and joyful. Promote the use of humor and singing.
- Make room in the classroom for cozy, safe areas where children can be alone if they wish.
- Get to know children's families and value them as partners. Invite their participation and input through comment cards, home visits, and casual conversation - especially when things are going well.

Strategies for Families

- Provide your child with a dependable, warm, and loving relationship.
- Listen to your children and observe them. Know what they are interested in and build on that with activities you can share.
- Involve your child in planning activities such as meals, celebrations, and outings.
- Nurture a child's natural curiosity and encourage the trying of new things by sharing the world and celebrating it together.
- Help your child identify and understand the emotions she feels.
- Set a good example through the way you address intense feelings such as fear, anger, jealousy, sadness, and excitement and in the way you handle conflict.
- Help children see the natural consequences of their actions in a positive way - such as helping them put away their toys while explaining that this will make it easier to find them the next time.
- View all experiences, both positive and negative, as opportunities for further exploration and learning.
- Raise children's awareness of their cultural heritage and their pride in it.
- Understand what can realistically be expected of children in general and your child in particular.

Developing a Sense of Self with Others

Strategies for Early Educators

- Create opportunities for children to interact with others who have varying characteristics and abilities, identifying and pointing out areas in which they share a common interest.
- Observe children in the classroom and facilitate their entry into social groups with their peers.
- Promote respect and appreciation for each child's culture and the cultures of others (e.g., develop a family photo wall and talk about each family, including people of various cultures, ages, and abilities).
- Invite families to visit the classroom and share their cultural experiences.
- Alert children to the feelings and emotional needs of others (e.g., display and talk about pictures depicting various emotions; point out how children feel in various real-life situations).
- Help children see the effect of their behavior on others by encouraging them to see things through other perspectives and share their ideas about solving problems and social conflicts (e.g., facilitate the process of conflict resolution).
- Protect children's right to express emotions. Allow them to be sad or angry and validate those feelings by naming them and talking about them. Encourage them to ask for help when needed.

- Ask for children's ideas in establishing classroom rules and limits. Establish, model, and explain simple rules in terms they can understand.
- Be aware of social interactions among children and create opportunities to support friendships.
- Make the classroom the children's space, with displays of their creations, experiences, interests, and cultures.
- Create many inviting areas of the room where small groups of children can play.
- Model asking for and understanding the viewpoints and opinions of others.
- Promote an atmosphere of cooperation instead of competition (e.g., introduce activities that require two or three children to work together).
- Provide opportunities for children to be responsible members of the classroom community, respecting shared rights and property and helping others (e.g., assign individual cubbies for belongings; rotate responsibility for tending classroom plants).
- Maintain an ongoing flow of information between school and family, through home-school journals or cassette tapes, suggestion boxes, weekly newsletters, phone calls, or classroom visits.

Strategies for Families

- Encourage and reinforce caring behavior in your child by outwardly showing affection to members of your family.
- Share your feelings and emotions.
- Create opportunities for positive interactions and friendships in a variety of settings (such as participating in neighborhood potlucks or impromptu ball games).
- Encourage children to ask for assistance when needed, being aware of their emerging skills.
- Establish, explain, and model simple rules (a bedtime routine, for example) in terms your child can understand.
- Promote respect and appreciation for your own culture and for the cultures and abilities of others. Establish traditions such as sharing family stories and celebrating special events or occasions.